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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS
STATE FOR EAP/MLS AND DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PHUM PGOV PREL VM
SUBJECT: MPS NOTCHES UP CRITICISM OF U.S. "THREAT" ON NATIONAL TV
NEWS PROGRAM

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On August 19, as part of its nightly national newscast, Vietnam National Television (VTV) aired a 20-minute segment outlining police confessions from recently arrested political prisoners, including prominent lawyer Le Cong Dinh. In the final clip, Dinh described his

12. (SBU) COMMENT: Provocative, to be sure, but we do not want to overreact. While the format was unprecedented, the content was not: conspiring our efforts to promote an independent judiciary, which almost by definition represents a challenge to the CPV's complete monopoly on power. That we will protest. But we do not see the episode, however distasteful, as portending a chill in relations. In separate conversations over the past few prominent members of the Politburo -- PM Dung, President Triet, DPM/FM Khiem, and Hanoi Party Secretary Nghi -- have emphasized both the positive

The Broadcast

13. (SBU) At 7:00 pm on August 19, Vietnam National Television (VTV), as part of its nightly national news broadcast, aired a segment purporting to be a day's notice and without explanation. (Note: The Commission is headed by the Politburo's newest member, To Huy Rua. End note.) The primetime

The Confessions

14. (SBU) After a brief introduction, the program began with the confession of Viet Youth for Democracy (VYD) and Democratic Party of Vietnam (DPV) member Nguyen Tien Trung. Trung said his political activism dated back to his interests. Trung said that his "biggest mistake" was that he had "placed too much trust and reliance" on (unnamed) foreign politicians to bring about democratic change in Vietnam. Trung also said that he introduced blogger Duy Thuc and lawyer Le Cong Dinh to the DPV. Trung stated that his activities had seriously violated the GVN's laws, and that he very much regretted the impact his actions had on his family and friends. Asking for leniency to abandon his links with Viet Youth for Democracy and the DPV and stop all activities against the GVN.

15. (SBU) The next, particularly heavily edited, clip featured the author of the blog "Change We Need," Tran Huynh Duy Thuc. Thuc described in detail the CPV leadership. (Thuc added that he had hoped to become Minister of Economics in the new government.) Thuc confessed to meeting Le Cong Dinh and Sy Binh in Thailand in March 2009, where they planned to set up two new political parties in 2010, the Labor Party of Vietnam and the Socialist

16. (SBU) The edited confession of retired Colonel and blogger Tran Anh Kim took a similar line. Kim described his contacts and membership in various radio stations" and to "instigating land protestors to support the future standing of the DPV." Kim also admitted he received money from (unnamed)

U.S. Officials Named

17. (SBU) The final confession featured the most prominent of the four individuals: HCMC-based lawyer Le Cong Dinh. It began with a somewhat surprising statement to have a government based on the rule of law. Dinh said that he realized -- based on the USG's interest in fostering cooperation between the executive and court system and that of Vietnam -- that the USG wanted to encourage an independent judicial system in Vietnam, a system that would be independent of the MICHALAK